

Congressman Blumenauer is a strong advocate on Capitol Hill for increasing the number and variety of transportation choices available to his constituents. Providing transportation options builds livable communities and saves money.

Transportation choices play a major role in quality of life, influencing everything from access to economic opportunities to environmental quality and community safety. Building transportation choices in communities means providing access to federal funding as well as ensuring the flexibility to use transportation dollars to best fit local needs. Important policies that Congressman Blumenauer has supported include building light rail and streetcar transit systems, redesigning neighborhood streets and sidewalks to be more pedestrian friendly, reducing the environmental damage caused by road projects and supporting a vibrant freight transportation system. All of these policies are designed to providing people with choices in how they travel and improve economic conditions for transportation users.

For more specific information on federal transportation policies, programs and funding, visit the U.S. Department of Transportation. For more information on Oregon transportation policies, programs, and funding, visit the Oregon Department of Transportation.

Use the following menu to learn more about Congressman Blumenauer's transportation priorities:

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Streetcar and “Small Starts”

Communities around the country are expressing an interest in small-scale rail based transit lines – similar to the Portland Streetcar – to catalyze redevelopment in central city areas and to connect neighborhoods. In Portland, we are pursuing additions to the current streetcar network on the Eastside and to Lake Oswego. To meet this growing interest in streetcars, Congressman Blumenauer introduced legislation in the 108th Congress, the “Community Streetcar Development and Revitalization Act.” This bill was folded into the most recent surface transportation reauthorization, the “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users Act” (SAFETEA-LU), and created a new program providing federal funding that—when matched with local funds—provided the capital and start-up costs of streetcar development and expansion. The program is aimed at smaller projects than traditional light rail projects and emphasizes economic redevelopment as an important aspect of each qualifying project.

Congressman Blumenauer is working with colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives and streetcar advocates around the country to ensure that the Federal Transit Administration adopts appropriate regulations for implementation of the Small Starts program and that the program is adequately funded.

Amtrak and Freight Rail

Amtrak, the country's national passenger railroad, is facing a serious funding crisis. Congressman Blumenauer is actively engaged in improving the long-term viability of Amtrak. Through his work on the Passenger Rail Caucus, he works to ensure that we do not lose our national passenger railroad, and advocates for opportunities to expand high-speed rail corridors to the Pacific Northwest.

Freight railroads are another important part of our transportation system, carrying over 40% of all goods moved in this country. Rail provides an important alternative and in many cases, a compliment to moving freight by air or road often moving goods more cheaply and with fewer environmental costs. Congressman Blumenauer is a supporter of several important rail bills. H.R.1132 would extend and modify the railroad track maintenance credit to (1) increase the allowable amount of the railroad track maintenance tax credit; (2) extend such credit through 2010; and (3) allow such credit against alternative minimum tax liabilities. In prior congresses, Mr. Blumenauer has supported the the National Rail Infrastructure Program Act, which would provide grants for projects that address railroad infrastructure and systems deficiencies.

Bike and Pedestrian Issues

After decades of working to promote bicycles as a means of everyday transportation, Congressman Blumenauer's efforts were rewarded with the passage of his Bicycle Commuter Act. This legislation, enacted as part of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (HR 1424), allows employers to offer their employees a tax-exempt transportation fringe benefit of \$20 per month for purchasing, maintaining, or storing a bicycle. As of 2008, employers may offer employees tax-exempt benefits of up to \$215 per month for parking, or \$110 per month for using transit or vanpools. The Bike Commuter Act balances these incentives by extending commuting benefits to bicyclists.

What the Bike Commuter Bill Does:

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Amends Section 132(f) of the tax code to include "bicycles" in the definition of transportation that qualifies for tax-free fringe benefits.

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Provides clear incentives for employees to bike to work, which is a cleaner, healthier, more efficient mode of transportation.

Why is this Important?

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Financial incentives have long been offered for people who commute by other transportation modes—it's time to level the playing field by including bicyclists in the IRS's Transportation Fringe Benefit.

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With over 50% of the working population commuting 5 miles or less to work, bicycles offer the strongest potential for reducing single-occupancy automobile trips.

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According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, bicycles are second only to cars as a

preferred form of transportation. It has never made any sense to exclude this highly preferred mode of transportation.

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Studies have shown that when people have the right accommodations for cycling, such as bike parking or showers, they are 40% more likely to bike to work.

Communities across the nation are seeking to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and enhance neighborhood safety. Now a small change in the tax code allows the federal government to assist in those efforts.

For more information on the Bicycle Commuter Act, click [here](#) .

More Legislation

Congressman Blumenauer recently introduced a bill recognizing the importance of bicycling for transportation and recreation. “The National Bike Bill” (H. Con. Res. 305) passed the House of Representatives in May of 2008, buoyed by thirty-four bipartisan cosponsors and the strong support of bicycling and health advocacy groups. The legislation documents more than twenty specific, quantifiable benefits of bicycling, calling on Congress to establish national target levels for increased bicycle use and intermodal transportation. The bill would provide federal incentives for bike-friendly policies at the state and local levels, such as expanding funding of transportation programs which support safety and non-motorized infrastructure enhancements, and developing coordinated interstate bicycle routes and land protections. Lastly, the legislation re-establishes the Interagency Bicycle Task Force launched after the 1994 report to Congress to promote bicycling and alternative transportation nationwide.

Congressman Blumenauer has also shown leadership in crafting legislation to make roads safer for cyclists and pedestrians. Working with his colleague Ron Klein, Congressman Blumenauer included an amendment to the “21st Century Green High Performing Public School Facilities Act” to fund improving building infrastructure to facilitate bicycle and pedestrian access. He has also headed efforts to increase funding for the Safe Routes to Schools program, expanding it to include students in grades K-12.

Transportation Highlights from Portland, Oregon

The growth in transit ridership and system construction in the past decade is truly impressive. Public transportation ridership levels continue to increase year by year.

In Portland, ridership has steadily increased on both rail and bus routes. This increase is a reflection of substantial investment by the region and the federal government in providing high quality transit service. Just since 2000, several new rail transit lines were completed. The extension of our MAX light rail transit system to the airport and a new streetcar connecting urban neighborhoods to the downtown were both built without federal transit funding; both leveraged tremendous local and private financing and both benefited from flexibility in the design and construction process. The Interstate MAX project, a \$350 million, 5.8 mile LRT extension along Interstate Avenue through North Portland was completed early and under budget.

Tri-Met has an existing Full Funding Grant Agreement with the Federal Transit Administration to construct I-205/Downtown Portland Mall MAX project, which is on track to receive \$80 million in federal funds in 2007. As Portland has worked to build a regional rail network, we have utilized a strong regional process of long-term planning, negotiations among regional partners, and the active engagement of the business community and those neighborhoods served by proposed lines. Consequently, Portland has developed innovative approaches for funding rail extensions that can be built more quickly and at a fraction of the price. A great example is the Portland Streetcar—the first modern streetcar line in the United States—that opened in July, 2003. This 2.4 mile alignment connects Portland State University with thriving business, retail and entertainment districts as well as the highest density neighborhood in the city.

The streetcar line was built and designed for \$54 million and construction occurred with minimal community disruption proceeding at the astonishing pace of one block every three weeks. The City of Portland and a non-profit organization, Portland Streetcar, Inc., manage operations. Average weekday ridership is already over 4,200 passengers per day and the economic benefits to the neighborhood have been enormous.